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ALEXANDER WILSON.

III. THE UNSUCCESSFUL LOVER.

BY FRANK L. BURNS.

Quite early in his career, at the Pantheon, Edinburgh, Alexander Wilson, in the character of a poor, love-lorn peddler, recited some original verses entitled "The Loss of the Pack," in a debate on the question as to "whether disappointment in love, or the loss of a fortune is the hardest to bear"; concluding with the following:

"Twas this, Sir President, that gart me start,
Wi' meikle grief and sorrow at my heart,
So gi'e my vote, frae sad experience, here
That disappointed love is waur to bear
Ten thousand times than loss o' world's gear."

He afterwards experienced the pain and humiliation in the train of the first condition; but the enjoyment of even the most modest competence, much less the shock and worry of a financial failure, were ever to remain a theory to him; therefore, without disputing his verdict, the fact remains that he was, from experience, totally incompetent to judge comparatively.

For the purpose of casting additional light on the personal character of Alexander Wilson; as well as to assemble a more or less important part of a number of closely related though widely distributed papers exhibiting in a measure self-conscious pseudo-philosophic meditations, hysterical sentimentalism and morbid melancholia; and the rapid transformation to accurate observation, sane self-restraint and vigorous application to a single design; the writer may, perhaps, be pardoned for the narration of his love romances, fragmentary as they are; in cold matter-of-fact words without the usual garnature deemed essential to a well-told tale of this nature.

It has been said by one of his biographers: "He has never yielded to the soft but patent sovereignty of love. In this respect he is almost alone among the warm-hearted sons of song. Rarely does he write of love; and when he does, it is like a man who might have thought about it, as about any other interest-

ing mental phenomena, but had never experienced its sublime power.”¹ Another wrote: “Like many sons of toil, he was not bound by very strong ties of sentiment to his native country; and what is a little remarkable in a poet’s life, he never formed any attachment of the heart such as bind men to their home. Here perhaps we may trace one cause of his want of success in poetry. Burns was always in love, and the passion never failed to kindle the fire of his genius. . . . But Wilson was a man of enterprise and action, and therefore was a stranger to many of those fine feelings and associations which give men success in poetry.”² The third: “Female attachment he had none, or he wisely allowed them to hold him so lightly, as neither to interrupt his pursuits or disturb his peace.”

But like a great many other statements in reference to this man, the above are not based upon facts. There are indisputable evidence that he was not an exception to the rule, but during his forty-eight years of life, he had no less than four affairs of the heart, three of which were unfortunate from inception.

While yet known as “Sandy, the lazy weaver,” in his own bonny Scotland, he “for some time had been attached to the sister of Mrs. Witherspoon, a pretty and respectable girl, to whom he made frequent allusions in his poems, though two only of those published contain any reference to her, and there can be little doubt that Martha McLean bore an influence with his fits of despondency.”³ She whom he addressed in his poems as “Matilda,” and who “was snatched by fortune from his arms.”⁴ The same, doubtless, celebrated in some poor, sentimental verses of a song in which he is betrayed into stating that “Matty is fame and ambition to me.”

Doubtless his earlier attachment made but a slight permanent impression upon his ardent nature, for while yet an unsettled, penniless schoolmaster, learning the German language in his adopted country; he writes to his friend Charles Orr:⁵

¹ Hetherington’s *Life of Wilson*.

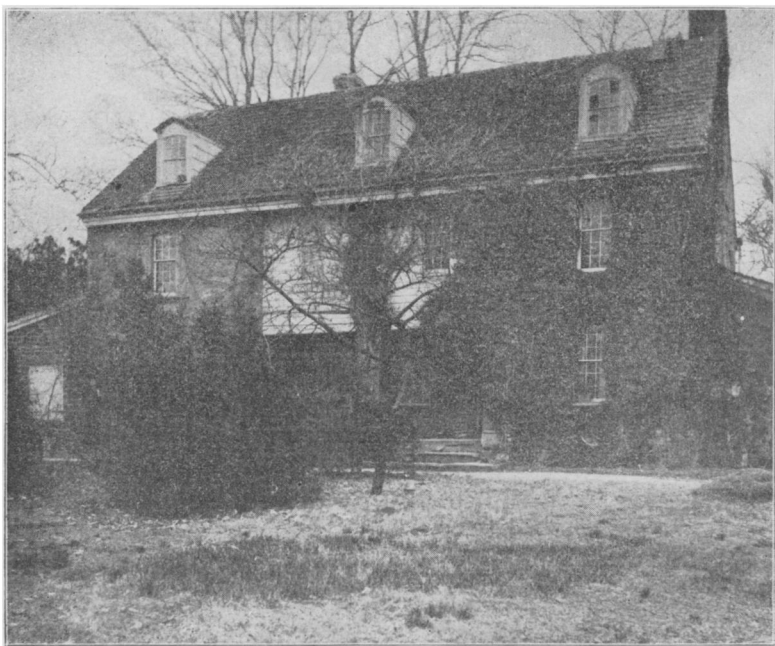
² Peabody’s *Life of Wilson*.

³ Jardine’s *Life of Wilson*.

⁴ Crichton’s *Life and Writings of Wilson*.

⁵ Grosart’s *Poems and Literary Prose of Alexander Wilson*.

“Milestown, July 23, 1800. . . . It was about the middle of last May, one morning in taking my usual rounds, I was delighted with the luxuriance of nature that everywhere smiled around me. The trees were covered with blossoms, enclosing the infant fruit that was, at some future day, to give existence to others. The birds, in pairs, were busily engaged preparing their nests to accommodate their little offspring. The colt prances by the side of its dam; the bleating lambs were heard from every farm; and insects, in thousands, were preparing to usher their multitude into being. In short, all nature, every living thing around me, seemed cheerfully engaged in fulfilling that great command, ‘multiply and replenish the earth,’ excepting myself. I stood like a blank in this interesting scene, like a note of discord in this universal harmony of love and self-propagation; everything I saw seemed to reproach me as an unsocial wretch separated from the great chain of nature and living only for myself. No endearing female regarded me as her other self, no infant called me its father. I was like a dead tree in the midst of a green forest, or like a blasted ear amidst the yellow forest.” This thought seemed to please him and he continues in a letter dated August 6, 1800: “Time has always been accounted among wise men the most precious gift of God to man; and has been, generally speaking, received and used as the most worthless and despicable. . . . Rose half an hour before day. Sauntered abroad, surveying the appearance of the fields, and contemplating the progressive advances of morning, the appearance of the moon, etc., without suggesting or having suggested one sentiment of grateful adoration to the great Architect of the Universe, without learning one truth that I was before ignorant of. Wrought one solitary problem before breakfast, composed eight lines of rhyme at noon, and am now writing these observations near evening. Thus fourteen hours passed almost unimproved away, and thus have thousands of precious hours perished! Not one prayer said, not one thought of matrimony entered my mind. An old bachelor, verging to the gloomy region of celibacy and old age, and clusters of dimple-cheeked, soft-eyed females in every log hut around, and



THE BARTRAM HOUSE.
Taken by Mr. Henry T. Coates, April 4, 1882.

sighing for a husband. . . . Mr. Sterne says, devoid of, a human being is undeserving the name of man. That is, to write a book, plant a tree, beget a child (I ought to have said, marry a wife first), build a house, and learn something every day that he did not before know."

A short time passes before he writes in very different strain to his friend Orr under the date of May 1st, 1801: "I have matters to lay before you that have almost distracted me. . . . I have no friend but yourself, and one whose friendship has involved us both in ruin, or threatens to do so." Three separate poems of no merit whatever, in which "Lavinia" seems to be the inspiration; one boldly addressed "to a young lady"; and his sudden withdrawal from Milestown, follow. It is evident that his affections had been won by a lady already married, whose name is carefully concealed by the Rev. Grosart, but as Dr. James Southall Wilson¹ says, he appears to have left the place with honor and discretion as soon as he realized its existence; although he implored his Philadelphia friend to send him tidings of the state of mind of his sweetheart: "July 2, 1801, Bloomfield, near Newark, New Jersey. . . . I have no company, and live unknowing and unknown. I have lost all relish for this country, and, if heaven spares me, I shall soon see the shores of old Caledonia. . . . In the meantime I request you, my dear friend, to oblige me in one thing if you wish me well. Go out on Saturday to ———'s and try to get intelligence how Mrs. ———'s family comes on, without letting any one know that you have heard from me. Get all the particulars you can, what is said of me, and how Mrs. ——— is, and every other information, and write me fully. I assure you I am very wretched, and this would give me the greatest satisfaction. ——— will tell you everything, but mention nothing of me to anybody on any account. Conceal nothing that you hear, but inform me of everything. My dear friend, I beg you will oblige me in this. I am very miserable on this unfortunate account." "July 23, 1801, Bloomfield. My Dear Friend. I received yours last evening. O how blessed it is to have one friend on whose affection, in the day of adversity, we can con-

¹ Alexander Wilson, Poet-Naturalist.

fide! As to the reports circulated in the neighborhood of Milestown, were I alone the subject of these they would never disturb me, but she who loved me dearer than her own soul, whose image is forever with me, whose heart is broken for her friendship to me, she must bear all with not one friend to whom she dare unbosom her sorrows. Of all the events of my life, nothing gives me such inexpressible misery as this. O, my dear friend, if you can hear anything of her real situation, and whatever it be disguise nothing from me. Take a walk up to ———'s, perhaps she has called lately there, and go out to ———'s on Saturday if possible. Let nobody whatever know that you have heard anything of me." "August 7, 1801, Bloomfield. My Dear Friend, I received yours yesterday. I entreat you keep me on the rack no longer. Can you not spare me *one* day to oblige me so much? Collect every information you can, but drop not a hint that you know anything of me. If it were possible you could see *her*, or any one who *had*, it would be unspeakable satisfaction to me. My dear Orr, the world is lost forever to me and I to the world. No time nor distance can ever banish her image from my mind. It is forever present with me, and my heart is broken with the most melancholy reflections. Whatever you may think of me, my dear friend, do not refuse me this favor to know how she is. Were your situation mine, I declare from the bottom of my soul I would hazard everything to oblige you. I leave the management of it to yourself. . . . Before you write, take a walk up to ———'s as if to enquire for me, and try if you can get any information there. I know that she used sometimes to go and see her. Forgive me, my dear friend, if in anything I have offended you. The more of mankind I see, the more sincerely I value your friendship, and trust it shall only dissolve when time to me shall be no more."

September 14, 1801: "The last letter I wrote you I fondly thought would be answered, but I have waited now three weeks in vain. . . . Your letters were all my company and amusement, but you have deprived me of even that."

February 7, 1802: "Mr. Orr, I have no faults to reproach you with. If I had, a consciousness of the number of my own

would justly impose silence on me. My disposition is to love those who love me with all the warmth of enthusiasm, but to feel with the keenest sensibility the smallest appearance of neglect or contempt from those I regard. Of your friendship I have a thousand times been truly proud; have boasted of your intimacy with me and your professional abilities, almost wherever I went. I have poured my soul into your bosom. If I have met, or only supposed that I have, in the moments of anxiety and deep mental perturbation, met with cold indifference from the only quarter I expected the sweets of friendship, they little know my heart who would expect it to make no impression on me."

February 14, 1802: "Dear Sir. It is too much. I cannot part with you after what you have said. I renounce with pleasure every harsh thought I hastily entertained of you. . . . I never spent ten weeks more unhappy than these have been, and it will be some time before my mind recovers itself. Past hopes, present difficulties, and a gloomy futurity, have almost deranged my ideas, and too deeply affected me."

"Of actual misconduct there is no evidence whatever; and in the too frequent instances of similar attachment in the lives of eminent men, very few indeed have acted with the same promptness and spirit of honor as Wilson, who, as we shall see, at once sacrificed his situation, and effectually and forever separated himself from the object of his regard."¹

Yet we find him in February, 1806, planning with his nephew, William Duncan, now schoolmaster at Milestown, to go to that place to take part in a political debate; which was not carried into effect for various reasons.

The truth-loving student does not have to read between the lines to infer that Wilson's conduct in the above peculiar instances, while at Milestown, lacked self-restraint, and was open to censure, even while it is shrouded in considerable mystery. The last letters were written from Gray's Ferry, Philadelphia. Time and absence wrought a partial cure, and he writes on July 15th, 1802: "My harp is new strung, and my soul glows with more ardour than ever to emulate those immortal bards

¹ Paton's Wilson the Ornithologist.

who have gone before me"; but he was subject to periods of despondency, and Colonel Carr, who had it from Wilson himself, relates to Ord that, "while he labored under great depression of spirits, in order to soothe his mind, he one day rambled with his gun. The piece by accident slipped from his hands, and in making an effort to regain it, the lock was cocked. At that moment had the gun gone off, it is more than probable that he would have lost his life, as the muzzle was opposite to his breast. When Wilson reflected on the danger which he had escaped, he shuddered at the idea of the imputation of suicide, which a fatal occurrence, to one in his frame of mind, would have occasioned. There is room to conjecture that many have accidentally met their end, whose memories have been sullied by the alleged crime of self-murder."¹ Mr. Lawson, the engraver, advised Wilson to turn his attention to drawing in his moments of leisure, in place of his flute-playing and verse-making; as being conducive to the restoration of his mental equilibrium; and a recent acquaintance with the venerable William Bartram induced him to make the effort, opening up new channels of thought and vistas of beauty; not the least of which was Bartram's fair niece.

Verily, like cures like! The episode I am about to relate could scarcely have been unknown to Ord, although he makes no allusion to it other than the publication of Wilson's letters to Bartram; and while it must have been patent to every close student of Wilson's life and works, the fact of his love for Ann Bartram and of the positive disapproval of his suit by her father; was first published a little more than a decade ago by a young Scotchman, at the time connected with the public press; and was based upon a paper on the family traditions prepared by William Middleton Bartram, but suppressed for family reasons. Although Mr. Bartram informed me that a portion of this newspaper article¹ was authentic, I find it glaringly inaccurate in many respects, as well as far too highly colored and theatrical to make its preservation worth while; and as William M. Bartram died before his contemplated history of the Bartram Garden and Family had taken shape, whatever was

¹ Ord's Life of Wilson.

really known by him in connection with this romance is probably lost. It is also unfortunate that the late Mrs. Robins did not verify a single statement, apparently, in her resume² of the newspaper amplification.

Miss Ann M. Bartram, plain Nancy at her Quaker home, the daughter of John Bartram, Jr., heir to the Bartram estate and brother of William, the intimate friend of Wilson; was born on February 15, 1779. "She had brown hair, expressive eyes, was slenderly built, was nearly a blonde, and grew up like a rose in her father's garden," as recorded by the family historian, William Middleton Bartram. "A love of birds and flowers and a keen appreciation of the beauties of nature distinguished Ann Bartram, and her face must have won many an admiring glance as she walked by her father's side in their rambles together after the beauties and mysteries of botany."

Fortunately we have several pen pictures of Wilson at about this period. Horace Binney, an eminent lawyer of Philadelphia, says: "His personal appearance was that of a modest, rather retiring man of good countenance, not decidedly Scotch, but still with a cast of it, rather more like a New England Congregational clergyman in his black dress, than any other description I can give. He was held in great esteem for probity, gentle manners and accomplishments in his special branch of science."³ Doubtless Charles Robert Leslie's description is a most accurate one; not merely because he also became a celebrated personage, but rather from the aptness of an artistic soul receiving and retaining a correct impression of an individual. "He looked like a bird; his eyes were piercing, dark and luminous, and his nose shaped like a beak. He was of a spare, bony form, very erect in his carriage, inclining to be tall; and with a very elastic step, he seemed qualified by nature for his extraordinary pedestrian

¹ A Romance of Bartram's Garden. Love's Young Dream Shattered by the Action of a Stern Father. Ann Bartram the Heroine. Alexander Wilson Her Choice, but, Against Her Will, She was Compelled to Wed Another. Wilson Died of a Broken Heart.—Philadelphia (Sunday) Press, May 3, 1896, p. 8.

² Behind the Wedding Veil, Osprey, Vol. III., 1899, p. 97.

³ Wilson's Poets and Poetry of Scotland, p. 420.

achievements. Alexander Wilson belonged to a class of men of which Scotland seems to have produced a greater number than any other country—men from the humble and middle classes of life, of poetic minds, lovers of nature, of science, and of art—men of unconquerable perseverance, who succeed at last in acquiring fame, and sometimes fortune, often in despite of the most adverse circumstances in early life.”¹

In a letter to William Bartram dated November 20th, 1803, Wilson writes: “. . . I have attempted two of those prints which Miss Nancy so obligingly and with so much honor to her own taste, selected for me. I am quite delighted with the anemone, but fear I have made but bungling work of it.” The Miss Nancy referred to is the Quaker maiden, Ann Bartram; and when Dr. Coues secured a copy of the Wilson manuscript poem entitled “The Beechen Bower,” then in the possession of Joseph M. Wade, it did not immediately occur that it must have been dedicated to Miss Bartram, although her given name appears in the second stanza, and it is dated January 18, 1804.

“O dear to my heart is this deepshaded Bower,
This snug little seat and this smooth Beechen Tree,
These old hoary Cliffs through the bushes that tower
And bend o’er the pool their semblance to see.
The fountains, the Grotto, the Laurel’s sweet blossom,
The Streamlet that warbles so soothing and free.
Green solitude! dear to the maid of my bosom
And so for her sake ever charming to me.

“Here seated with Anna, what bliss so transporting
I wish every moment an age were to be.
Her taste so exalted—her humour so sporting,
Her heart full of tenderness, virtue and glee.
Each evening sweet Bow’r round the cliffs will I hover,
In hopes her fair form thro’ the foliage to see.
Heav’n only can witness how dearly I love her,
How sweet Beechen Bower thy shades are to me.

[Signed] A. WILSON.”

Apparently a premature, if not a presumptive declaration which the author lacked the courage to deliver. Again, under the date of March 29th, in relating his attempts at drawing, he writes “. . . I am very anxious to see the performance of

¹ Leslie’s *Autobiographical Recollections*, pp. 163-165.

your fair pupil; and beg you would assure her for me that any of the birds I have are heartily at her service. Surely nature is preferable to copy after than the works of the best masters, though perhaps more difficult, for I declare that the face of an owl and the back of a lark have put me to a non plus; and if Miss Nancy will be so obliging as to try her hand on the last mentioned, I will furnish her with one in good order, and will copy her drawing with the greatest pleasure, having spent almost a week, on two different ones, and afterward destroyed them both and got nearly in the slough of despond." That he does not exaggerate the difficulty experienced in delineating the features of an owl is evident from the description Dr. Coues has given: "... from the backs and corners of various pieces of paper peer various faces of owls in all stages of incompleteness, showing how he practiced drawing these difficult subjects." Nor did he altogether overcome this fault is evident upon inspection of his drawings of the various species of the owls. Two days later he writes: "I sometimes smile to think that while others are immersed in deep schemes of speculation and aggrandizement—the building of towns and purchasing plantations, I am entranced in contemplation over the plumage of a lark, or gazing like a despairing lover on the lineaments of an owl. . . . I have live crows, hawks, and owls, opossums, squirrels, snakes, lizards, etc., so that my room has sometimes reminded me of Noah's ark; but Noah had a wife in one corner of it, and in this particular our parallel does not altogether tally." If Miss Bartram taught him the secret of the portrayal of his meadow lark, he proved an apt pupil, for it is beyond reproach. In the same letter he goes on to say: "... My dear friend, you see I take the liberty of an old acquaintance with you, in thus trifling with your time. You have already raised me out of the slough of despond, by the hopes of your agreeable conversation, and that of your amiable pupil. Nobody, I am sure, rejoices more in the acquisition of the beautiful accomplishment of drawing than myself. I hope she may persevere. I am persuaded that any pains you bestow on her will be rewarded beyond your expectations. Besides it will be a new link in that chain of friendship and consanguinity by which you are already united;

though I fear it will be a powerful addition to that attraction which was fully sufficient before to make even a virtuoso quit his owls and opossums and think of something else.”¹ A very bold hint! To one of his temperament there was no concealment. He spoke and wrote as he thought. His next letter written at the Union school, May 22nd, 1804, as usual contains a message for the niece: “. . . Mrs. Leech requests me to send Miss Bartram two birds, and thinks they would look best drawn so that the pictures may hang their length horizontally. I send a small scroll of drawing papers for Miss Nancy. She will oblige me by accepting it.”² Soon there appeared in the *Literary Magazine* a poem descriptive of Bartram’s garden and its inhabitants, which Wilson has entitled “A Rural Walk,” and dated from Gray’s Ferry, August 10th, 1804, of which the following is an extract:

“One flower, one sweet and faithful flower,
Worth all the blossom’d wilds can give;
Forsakes him not thro’ seasons lour
Tho Winter’s roaring tempests rave.

But still with gentlest look and air,
Befriends his now declining years;
By every kind officious care,
That Virtue’s lovely self endears.

When Science calls, or books envite,
Her eye the waste of age supply;
Detail their pages with delight,
Her dearest uncle list’ning by.

When sorrows press, for who are free?
Her generous heart the load sustains;
In sickness none so kind as she,
To soothe and assuage his pains.

Thus twines the honeysuckle sweet,
Around some trunk decay’d and bare;
Thus angels on the pious wait,
To banish each distressing care.

¹ Ord’s Life of Wilson.

² Darlington’s Memorials of John Bartram and Humphrey Marshall.

¹ *Literary Magazine*, Vol. II, 1804, pp. 533-536.

O happy he who slowly strays,
On Summer's eve these shades among;
While Phœbus sheds his yellow rays,
And thrushes pipe their evening song.

But happier he, supremely blest,
Beyond what proudest peers have known;
Who finds a friend in Anna's breast,
And calls that lovely plant his own."

Wilson was soon to be awakened from his pleasant dream of domestic felicity. Notwithstanding the Bartram family being Friends, they boasted a coat of arms and were justly proud of their lineage and of their beautiful estate upon which so much care and taste had been lavished. When the father said "Mr. Wilson is my friend, but not my choice for my daughter's husband," there was little thought of rebellion, for "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee," in the simple form of worship in which the daughter had been reared, was firmly engrained. It doubtless required but a gentle hint on the part of the father to the sensitive Scotchman, to cause an entire abandonment of his aspirations in that quarter, before the affair had progressed very far; and that he finally died of a broken heart as the anonymous writer would have us believe, is absurd.

This must have occurred a little while previous to his trip to the Niagara Falls in October, perhaps it occasioned it; resulting in the composition of his longest poem, "The Foresters." Coues advises every one to read this narrative, not as a poem (poets do not walk from Philadelphia to Niagara Falls and back in the late fall) but for the interesting facts it contains. Henceforth in the cordial relation existing between Wilson and Bartram, the old fashioned pet name of the niece is no longer penned. Soon after his return from the twelve hundred mile tramp, he writes to Bartram in a letter dated December 14th, 1804, " . . . With no family to enchain my affections, no ties but that of friendship; and the most ardent love for my adopted country—with a constitution which hardens amidst fatigue; and a disposition sociable and open, which can find itself at home by an Indian fire in the depths of the woods, as well as in

the best apartments of the civilized; I have at present a real design of becoming a traveler." Poor Wilson! He seems as little fitted financially for travel as for marriage, for he confesses to a capital not exceeding 75 cents!

Once more referring to Wilson's letters to his good friend Bartram, of July 2nd, 1805, he records a resolve from which there was no deviation until his death. "I dare say you will smile at my presumption when I tell you that I have seriously begun to make a collection of drawings of the birds to be found in Pennsylvania or that occasionally pass through it; twenty-eight, as a beginning, I send for your opinion. . . . *They may yet tell posterity that I was honored with your friendship, and that to your inspiration they owe their existence.*"¹

A prophesy! No more misdirected efforts. No further striving for the unattainable, but, quoting Coues: "Emerging from obscurity by an indomitable perseverance that fairly beat bad luck out of the field, the 'smoky flux' of his mysterious genius at length burst into flame that made his life luminous."² Therefore, notwithstanding the opinions and declarations of his biographers as quoted at the beginning of this paper, the opposite sex had a very material and unexpected influence in the realization of his dreams of fame. It is more than hinted that unrequited love was not the least of his reasons for emigrating to America; the same not incurable malady caused him to turn to drawing and ornithology for relief; and his third unsuccessful venture placed him in the position to dedicate his life to that all absorbing pursuit and the publication of the "American Ornithology" upon which his right to fame chiefly rests. On November 29th, 1805, he sends Bartram a proof sheet of his first plate etched by himself and requests that he "be so good as to communicate to me your own corrections, and those of your young friend and pupil. I will receive them as a very kind and particular favor." Again on May 22nd, 1807, a request is made through the uncle to the niece: "By the impressions of my two plates that accompany this you will see that I

¹ Ord's Life of Wilson.

² Private Letters of Wilson, Ord and Bonaparte, Penn Monthly, 1879, p. 443.

have a request to make to Miss Bartram, if the state of her health will permit. We want well colored specimens of the plates to be sent to Boston, Charlestown, New York, etc., and as my time will not permit me to do them myself I have presumed to apply to her to color the impressions that accompany them, for which I shall make any returns. Perhaps Mary Leach might be set to some parts of them with safety, which would lessen the drudgery. If this request should be considered disagreeable you will not, I am sure, impute it to any motives but those of the highest esteem of those to whom I make it, and the impressions may be returned tomorrow by any safe conveyance with perfect good nature on both sides.”¹

I had the pleasure of examining a brief manuscript note in the possession of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, dated August 28th, 1808, detailing the result of some experiments on the “Granddaddy Long-legs,” on the morning of the 28th of March, 1808, in the presence of Mr. William Bartram and his niece, Miss Ann Bartram; also a letter dated July 9th, 1811, from the Bartram garden, introducing his friend, Major Carr, to George Ord;² which serve to show the perfect good will and understanding existing between Wilson and the members of that family. For, without haste or compulsion, Miss Bartram married Robert Carr, the well-to-do Second street printer, in March, 1809, who became a resident of the botanic garden, devoting himself with great care and interest to the preservation of the collection, of which there were 2,000 species of our native productions contained in a space of six acres; until he being in his declining years and their son having died, they became anxious to retire from the nursery business and offered to surrender the property to Andrew M. Eastwick, who held a mortgage of \$15,000 against it, and who afterward, until his pecuniary embarrassment during the civil war, took the most jealous care of that most historic spot. Mr. Carr was conspicuous in the local militia, became an officer in the United States

¹ Stone's *Some Unpublished Letters of Alexander Wilson and John Abbott*, Auk, Vol. XXIII, 1806, p. 362.

² Grosart's *Memoir and Remains of Alexander Wilson*, Vol. I, pp. vi.-vii, and xlvii.

army during the second war with England, and was for some time adjutant general of the state, with the title of colonel. Mrs. Carr lived until October 30th, 1858.¹

The susceptible Wilson subsequently became engaged to a Miss Sarah Miller of Winterton, and a letter from him to her, while on his western trip in 1810, has been preserved, showing little of the ardent lover of earlier days. He writes in part: "Nine hundred miles distant from you sits Wilson, the hunter of birds' nests and sparrows, just preparing to enter on a wilderness of 780 miles—most of it in the territory of Indians—*alone*, but in good spirits, and expecting to have every pocket crammed with skins of new and extraordinary birds before he reaches the city of New Orleans. I dare say you have long ago accused me of cruel forgetfulness in not writing as I promised, but that I assure you, was not the cause. To have forgotten my friends in the midst of strangers, and to have forgotten *you* of all others, would have been impossible. But I still waited until I should have something very interesting to amuse you with, and am obliged at last to take up the pen without having anything remarkable to tell you of." The fact was that his "*American Ornithology*" had become his chief love; he had learned to wait complacently upon prosperity before the consummation of matrimony, and we all know the end; his fiancée, in conjunction with George Ord, became his executrix at the time of his death in 1813.

¹ Harshberger's *Botanists of Philadelphia and Their Work*.